

Scoring new life goals with the world's game

Increasing participation in physical activity through community sport and active recreation

This project is part of a VicHealth funding program known as PICSAR, which aims to increase participation levels in community sport and active recreation amongst people with disabilities and those from low socio-economic, Indigenous and new arrival communities.

The organisation

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) is a community-based organisation that advocates for the needs of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. It combines policy development and direct service delivery within a community development framework, giving it strong connections with young people and their communities while enabling positive change on a local, state and national level.

CMY aims to influence the social policy agenda and the social services network in Australia to ensure that young people from diverse cultural backgrounds have every opportunity to succeed in Australian society.

The project

The Hume Futsal program addresses barriers to participation in sports for newly arrived young people. The Hume Futsal League is a low-cost, community-based indoor soccer program designed to offer young people the opportunity to participate in an organised sport in their local area.

The program is a partnership between CMY, Arabic Welfare, Banksia Gardens Community Centre, Meadow Heights Learning Shop, Dallas Neighbourhood House, Football Federation Victoria and Victoria Police. Financial support is provided by VicHealth and the Broadmeadows Magistrates' Court.



Nabil Hermiz is an inspirational role model at Hume Futsal. *Photograph courtesy Diana Amato.*

Hume Futsal reinvigorates newly-arrived young people

The story

Through all the upheaval and change in Nabil's life, there has been one constant – football! Nabil's passion was instilled in him as a youngster in Iraq, where football is revered by people from all cultural and religious backgrounds. Every day after school, a game of football would begin in his neighbourhood – taking place on the streets, not beautiful green soccer pitches. With the pride of the neighbourhood at stake, Nabil and his

friends would use their creativity and skills to trick and beat their opponents, the object being to use the most audacious tricks possible to score a goal.

With the onset of war in Iraq, Nabil and his family sought asylum in Syria. Nabil's family spent a difficult 2½ years in Syria before coming to Australia. Like many young people who flee conflict, Nabil's education had been severely disrupted. He arrived in a country he

More information about Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation (PICSAR) is available on the VicHealth website at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/picsar

did not know, with a language he could not speak and a culture he did not quite understand. Nabil's family settled in Melbourne and he began to learn English at the Broadmeadows English Language Centre. This was, at times, a slow and frustrating process. He spent one year at the language centre under the guidance of some of Melbourne's most passionate ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers. During this time, he was fortunate enough to make two good friends, Hussam and Hans, who were also Assyrian Iraqis studying at the centre.

The three young men formed a strong friendship, supporting each other as they traversed the many obstacles they faced in settling in Melbourne. When they completed their study at the language centre, the three friends continued their education at Kangan Batman TAFE ESL VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) program.

Hussam and Hans share Nabil's passion for football; however, they were all struggling to find an environment where they could express themselves through their sport. While studying at TAFE, the three young men joined the Hume Futsal program.

Through the Hume Futsal program, CMY linked the young men to the Brunswick Zebras Soccer Club. The Zebras had created a coaching program specifically for newly arrived young people, funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. After completing the program, Nabil now has his junior coaching licence and is coaching the Zebra's Under 10 team every Saturday morning.

Nabil, Hans and Hussam are inspirational role models, volunteering at Hume Futsal, coaching younger players and refereeing games. Their involvement has been a great success for their personal and professional development as well as for the sustainability of the program. At CMY's suggestion, all three young men have also returned to Broadmeadows ELC and have developed and delivered a

six-week coaching program. As former students of the centre, the young men felt a great sense of pride and achievement in returning to implement the program which they proudly delivered completely in English. They felt it was important to give something back to those that had helped them when they arrived.

This program has been so successful Nabil and Hans will continue the coaching sessions in the future, as well as work at the centre one day a week as teacher's aides.

Further success for Nabil came when CMY's Sports and Recreation Project Officer invited him to join The Big Issue Street Soccer program in Broadmeadows. Nabil's commitment to the program, sense of team work and football ability saw him selected to represent the Victorian Metro team in the National Championships.

Vic Metro took the title, with an elated Nabil earning the nickname 'Ronaldo' by his team mates. Nabil's skills and his ability to work with others were noticed, ensuring his selection in the Australian Street Soccer squad.

To represent your country is the dream of many young people who play sport and this dream has now become a reality for one Iraqi-Australian. Nabil Hermiz, in September 2009, put on the green and gold in Milan, Italy, to play in the Street Soccer World Cup.

CMY believes Nabil's involvement with sport has played a pivotal role in his settlement in Australia. It has helped him learn English, gain employment, increase his confidence and has importantly opened up many new social networks which continue to offer him wonderful opportunities in his life.

For more information about the Centre for Multicultural Youth go to: info@cmymy.net.au; www.cmymy.net.au
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PICSAR

Sport and active recreation organisations are well placed to assist VicHealth in addressing the health inequalities that result in poorer health outcomes for many groups in the community.

They have a tradition of providing opportunities for individuals and groups to:

- participate in physical activity,
- connect with other members of the community,
- feel part of their local community, and
- develop knowledge and skills that can be used in a range of contexts.

The Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation (PICSAR) Program comprises three funding programs:

- State and Regional Grants
- Active Participation Grants
- Active Club Grants

The first two programs are long-term investments that work with State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies, statewide peak agencies and regional organisations to increase participation in physical activity in specific target populations.

A learning snapshot from the independent evaluation being conducted by Monash University/ ARTD Consultants shows that:

1. partnerships are perceived as beneficial to program delivery
2. it is important that staff (paid or voluntary) have the required skills to implement activities
3. sports at all levels should consider adapting policies and activities to provide greater flexibility to promote inclusion.